

**Testimony of Ken Skovron**  
Owner of Darien Cheese and Fine Foods  
January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2015

**In support of HB 5349**  
**AN ACT ESTABLISHING A CHEESE SHOP WINE AND BEER PERMIT.**

Senator Leone, Representative Baram, Senator Witkos and Representative Carter, thank you hearing my testimony in support of House Bill 5349. This bill would allow cheese shops to sell limited amounts of wine and beer.

As the owner of Darien Cheese & Fine Foods I support this bill in the name of fair trade and the opportunity to compete on a more equal basis with liquor stores, grocery stores and deli's that already offer limited alcohol products such as beer. I feel that the laws in regard to this matter are restrictive to the growth of small entrepreneurial businesses in our state and are not current or progressive to the new market trends.

Other New England states such as Vermont, New Hampshire and Massachusetts have laws that allow cheese stores to sell limited quantities of wine and beer and the results have proven to be very positive and not harmful to their bottle shops. At the moment I feel that the independent cheese shop has been placed at a competitive disadvantage. By allowing the limited sales of wine & beer in our shops we will have the equal opportunity to grow, expand and compete with stores that are already doing so.

All small brick & mortar retailers are feeling the loss of sales from the Big Box and online retailers. I feel that it is un-fair to pass laws that give only some of the retailers the full benefit to grow and expand their businesses while others are restricted.

We have posted a petition in our shop and online and have received overwhelming support and hundreds of signatures. Many of our customers wrote comments of positive support, that it would be a natural extension of the product line that we offer in our store. Our customers also feel that it would be a fair and progressive move by the state of Connecticut to support this bill favorably. Over 1,000 people are following this on our Facebook page.

In the last state of the union address president Obama made a point to say that this country does best when everyone gets their fair shot, when everyone gets their fair share, when everyone plays by the same set of rules.

Thank you for your time and hearing me today. I would be happy to answer any questions.